

Claims:

17. (Currently amended) An apparatus for handling wafers, wherein the apparatus is configured to place said wafers from a wafer-holding cassette into in a wafer processing chamber, and wherein said wafer processing chamber has having a wafer holding device including a cooling plate and a heating plate, wherein said wafers are provided for processing in said chamber in a wafer cassette, the apparatus for handling wafers comprising:

an external handling device having grippers for transferring said wafers between said cassette and said chamber, wherein said external handling device is disposed external to said wafer processing chamber; and

an internal handling device ~~provided~~ disposed in a cooled area of said wafer processing chamber, said internal handling device having at least one fork arranged to move with at least two degrees of freedom and arranged to interact with said grippers of said external handling device to receive a wafer therefrom, said fork being arranged to move said wafers between said cooling plate and said heating plate.

18. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein said fork is arranged to be move under a placement location for said wafers on said wafer holding device.

19. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein said heating plate and said cooling plate are arranged next to one another in said chamber.

20. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 19 wherein said heating plate and said cooling plate are arranged one behind the other in said chamber.

21. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein there is provided a cooling device for cooling said internal handling device.

22. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in any of claims 17 through 21 wherein there are provided multiple heating and cooling plates arranged in a stack in said chamber.

23. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 22 wherein said internal and external handling devices are arranged to load wafers on said plate sequentially.

24. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 22 wherein said internal and external handling devices are arranged to load wafers on said plate simultaneously.

25. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein said fork is arranged to be preheated.

26. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 25 wherein said fork is arranged to contact said heating plate for said preheating.

27. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein there is provided an additional internal handling device.

28. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein there are provided multiple chambers arranged in a stack.

29. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein said chamber has first and second openings and wherein there are provided two of said external handling devices, one for transferring wafers through each of said openings.

30. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 17 wherein said chamber and said external handling device are surrounded by an enclosure.

31. (Previously presented) Apparatus as specified in claim 30 wherein said enclosure is purged by gas at a low overpressure.